

Srimate Ramanujay namah

Visit to the sacred abode of lord Muktinath (Mukti Narayan)

1. Start : Delhi, May 29, 2009

Took train from old Delhi railway junction for Gorakhpur. Amritsar Katihar express (also called Amrapali) reached Delhi Junction four hours late and left Delhi station at 7:30 pm instead of 3:30 pm. While reaching Gorakhpur the train became late by six hours and I could get down at platform at 1:45 pm, May 30, 2009 against the schedule time of 5:50 am.

2. May 30, 2009 Gorakhpur

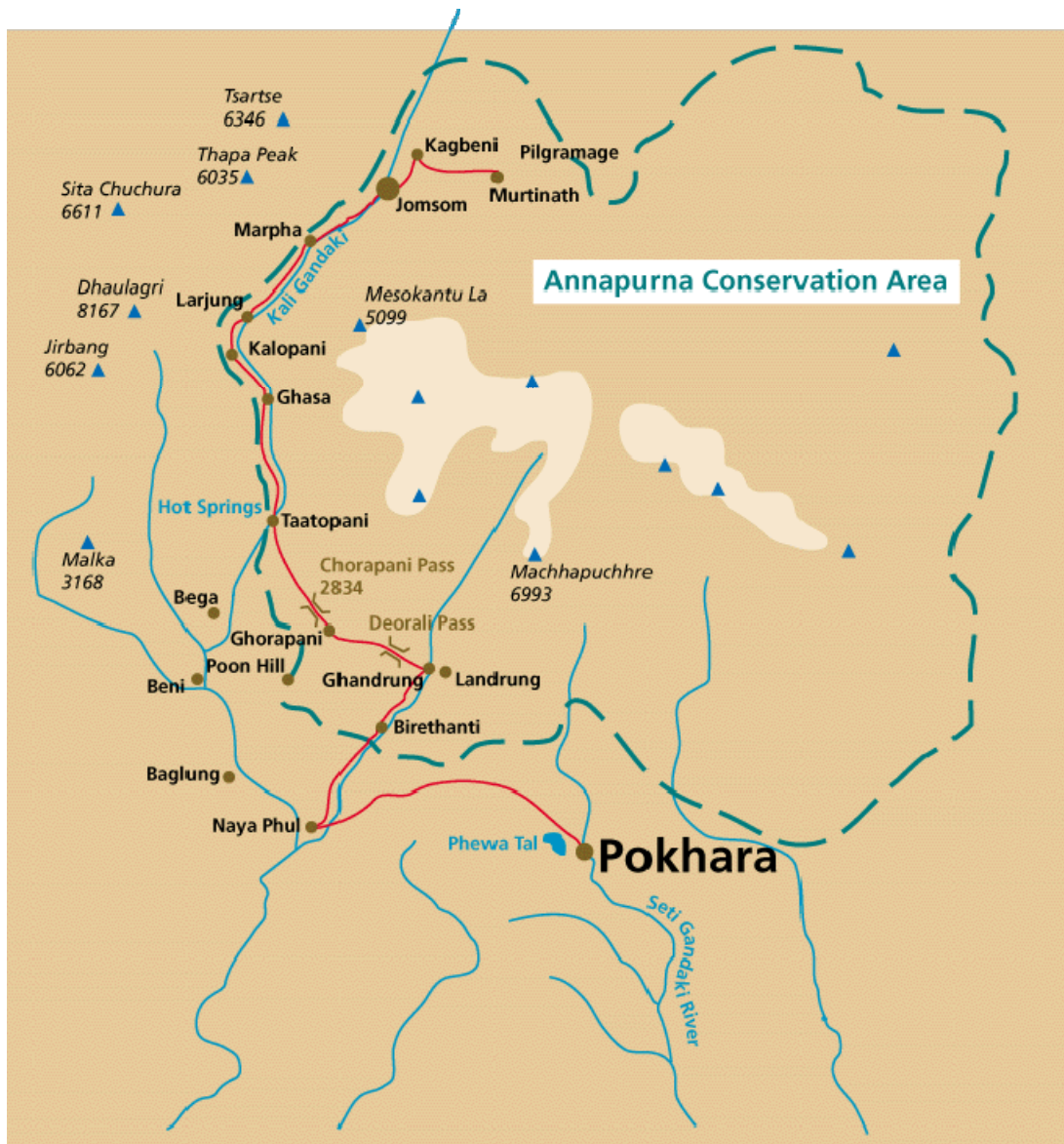
Took bus from Gorakhpur to Sunauli (Indian boarder town) and reached there at about 6 pm. Crossed the border line, and on Nepal side a formal check of the baggage was done by the Nepalese officials. Got a night bus from there to Pokhara. Sometimes the buses are not available right at Sunauli border and one has to go to Bhairwan, a couple of km inside Nepal. The bus left Sunauli at about 6:30 pm via Butwal and reached Pokhara in the morning at 7 am, May 31, 2009.

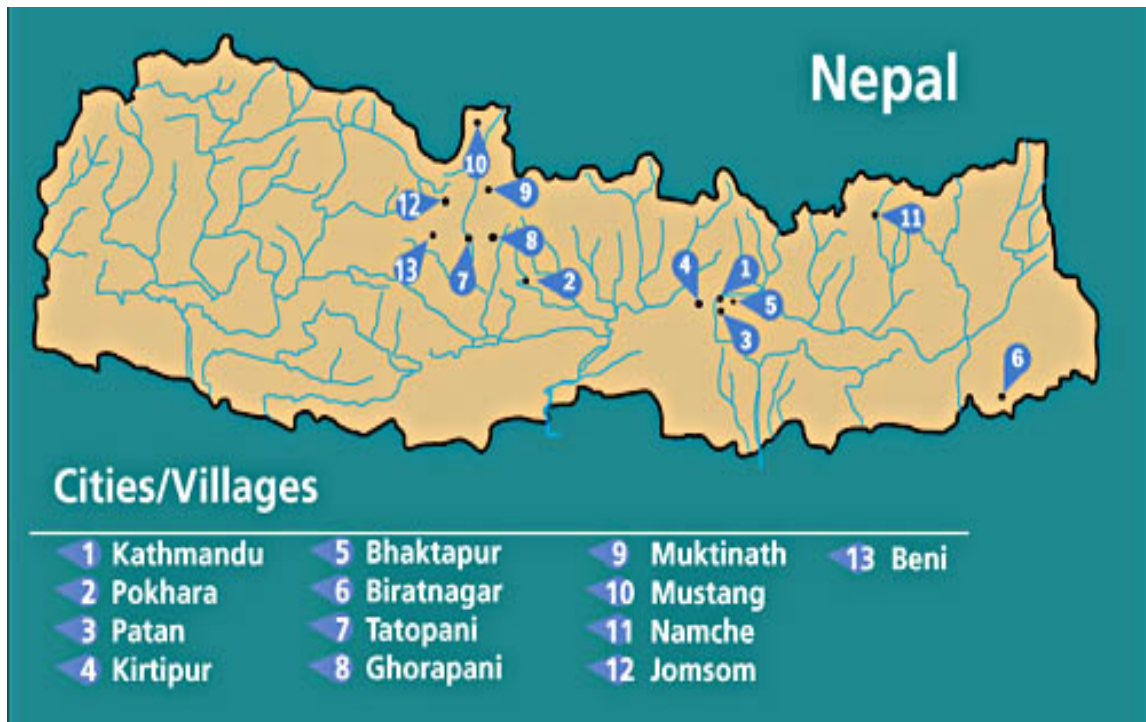
While buying bust ticket (INR 250; Indian currency is popularly called IC, and Nepalese currency called NC) at Sunauli the travel agent also booked a single accommodation room at Pokhara (Dharmma Inn) for a tariff of Rs 400 (INR), and I had to pay INR 200, half money as advance at Sunauli. The Dharmma Inn representative had come to receive me at bus stand and took me to the hotel by a Maruti car (hotel vehicle) as the transport was complimentary in the hotel tariff.

3. May 31, 2009 Pokhara

After I settled down in the hotel room, and finished my breakfast, the hotel representative took me at 10 am to Nepal Tourist Registration office at Pokhara. I had to carry 2 passport size photos ,and after filling a prescribed form and submitting the fee of NC 300, I got the permit for trekking . The permit is said to be valid for 3 months although nothing is mentioned in this regard on the permit paper. I had to pay additional NC 100 to the hotel representative for his assistance in taking me to the office and taking back to the hotel.

Before leaving to obtain the trekking permit, the payment for the air ticket of Yeti air lines was made in cash at the Dharmma Inn help desk counter itself. Up and down ticket for Pokhara – Jomsom – Pokhara was booked on telephone on calling Yeti Airlines Kathmandu office number (977 – 14465888) from India on May 27, 2009. For payment a time limit of 12 noon, May 31, 2009 was prescribed by the airline. The relevant PNR of booking was noted down from the airline while booking the seat from India. Accordingly when I conveyed the PNR of booking, the hotel representative helped in buying the ticket (2 x 3790 NC or its equivalent IC about 4700) within the time limit of the payment.





4. June 1, 2009 Pokhara - Jomsom

Hotel vehicle charged NC 200 for dropping me at Pokhara airport at 5:15 am. Took the first Yeti airlines flight to Pokhara which took off at 6:30 am and landed at Jomsom in about 30 minutes. Normally the airlines run three consecutive flights to Jomsom and back to Pokhara everyday from morning 6:30 am to 10:00 am. After 10 am the wind speed goes very high and due to safety reason no flights are available after 10 am.



Before leaving Jomsom, the permit paper was produced first at the tourist Information Office counter. The official signed and sealed the permit showing the date of leaving

Jomsom. Thereafter the same was produced in the police office located about 200 m away from the tourist information office on way to Kagbeni. The police also sealed and signed the permit. Both the offices also made record in the official register about the permit. On trekking left Jomsom for Kagbeni. The distance of 10 km was covered in about 3 hrs 30 mts in the company of a few porters who were also going to Kagbeni. It was just a coincidence that porters met on way while leaving Jomsom alone. On way to Kagbeni the trekking route traversed almost on the bank of the Krishna (Kali) Gandaki river. The river passes through a wide valley (300 / 500 m) with water stream meandering in a width of not more than 10 m. For convenient trekking certain portion of the route passed through the bed of the river also. On way twice 15 – 20 minutes breaks were also taken to relax and regain the freshness.



- Jomsom Airport (*top left*)
- Jomsom town (*bottom left*)
- Aircraft (*single propeller 19 seater including attendant*)



Kali Gandaki (on way to Kagbeni)



Shalagram (*top*) collected from river bed and kept for sale by Eklabetti single house hold inhabitant (*right*)



5. June 1, 2009 Kagbeni – Muktinath

After reaching Kagbeni, the accompanying group of porters set out for another destination. Kagbeni is a confluence of Mustang river coming from North, Tibet side Himalaya, and Kak river coming from East, i.e., Muktinath. After the confluence the river is called Kali (Krishna) Gandaki and at the confluence locals offer life cherished oblation to their forefathers. It was around 10:30 am, and it was learnt that most of the height to Muktinath is covered in the balance stretch from Kagbeni to Muktinath. Although earlier it was planned to spend one night at Kagbeni, but this was reviewed in light of the fact that since it was early 10:30 am in the day it would be proper to utilize the time in moving towards Muktinath. Due to tiredness, it was decided to take a motorbike ride which cost NC 1500 and took about 45 minutes in reaching the gate of the Muktinath temple.

The jeeps are also available from Jomsom to Muktinath via Kagbeni. They carry 14 passengers and locals are charged only NC 150 for one side journey whereas the foreigners have to pay NC



300. The jeeps take about two hours from Jomsom to Muktinath, and they use the gravel road made on the bank of the Krishna Gandaki. Passengers get down at Ranipaua, about one km before the temple. From Ranipaua to the temple, the trekking passes through a rough climbing terrain. All the hotels, guest houses and restaurants are located down at Ranipaua. Elderly pilgrims are helped by motorbikes from Ranipaua (*photo*) to the temple by paying NC 325.



6. June 1, 2009 Muktinath



Luckily it was a sunny day indicating the lord was pleased to offer divine blessings to the visiting devotees. There are 108 *gomukh dhara* (cow mouth water fall) circumscribing the back side of the temple premises. Although the water was chill cold several devotees were taking head bath, but this devotee couldn't dare take drenching bath and therefore sprinkled water from each one of them over his

head chanting "***aum namoh narayanay***" and also begged pardon from the lord for not taking full fledged bath.



The sanctum sanctorum gate was closed temporarily and when the feminine priest arrived there were hardly three – four devotees waiting for the *darshan* including this devotee also. When the door opened and entry was granted, it was the opportunity of very rare divine experience. The super sublime benign face of the lord Muktinarayan with a smile could never be missed in the first sight. The life size lord Muktinarayan is in sitting posture with closed eyes. His four hands are equipped with the divine insignia. The right top hand middle finger holds the *chakra*. The left top hand is with *sankha* tied



rests over the left leg lying bent from the knee. The lord's head is crowned with long and impressive ear lobes. Goddesses lakshmi are in standing pose on either side close to



to wrist because the thumb, middle and ring fingers touch each other at their tips and the fore finger and the little finger are in straight erect posture. The lower right hand is holding *gada*, and the left lower hand holds *padma* but the fingers are in the posture like that of the left top hand such that the *padma* is inserted in the annular space created by curving of the thumb touching the middle and ring fingers. The right leg bent from the knee height is similar to the sitting height of the lord Himself. One hand of each of the two goddesses nearer to the lord are raised up with the straight open forefinger alerting the devotees about the presence of the lord while all the other fingers are kept folded forming the fist. The other hands of the two goddesses away from the lord are folded from the elbow and the palm rests over their (goddess) chests.

Two small idols of Sri Ramanuj swami and Sri Garudjee, also occupy their seat on the left front of the lord on a separate small pedestal. The same pedestal is also occupied in its central portion by three big size *Shalagram* with *urdhva pundra tilka* marked on each of them. On the right front of the lord is placed two small idols of Nara and Narayan in sitting meditative posture and they occupy the same pedestal as of *Shalagram*, Sri Ramanuja swami and Sri Garudjee. All the idols including the lord, and the two goddesses (excluding *Shalagram*) are of brass (*pital*) including *chakra*, *gada* and *padma* but the *sankha* is made of white shell¹.

¹ The following day of Ganga Dusahara it was noticed the brass *padma* was not in the possession of the lord. It could have been removed for cleaning but couldn't be placed back in its original position. Similarly it seems the shell *sankha* is tied to the lord's upper left arm later, and the initial brass *sankha* fitted in the space around the folded fingers is missing.

The specially tailored colourful dresses fitting well over the lord, goddesses, and the other idols are wrapped around them with the help of tying ribbons of the same cloth and no buttons are used.

Dry fruits, *Dhoti* for the lord, and *sari* for the goddesses were carried by this devotee from India. The offerings were accepted by the feminine priest. She immediately put the cloths over the deities and dry fruits were kept on the front pedestal. She also gave back part of the dry fruits and also one scarf from the goddess's dresses.

It was now late afternoon, and left the temple premises and came down to Ranipaua. One room at first floor in one of the hotels called Moon light was hired for IC 200 per day. On paying NC 175 simple rice, dal and vegetables were also purchased for lunch. when evening set in, the bulb powered by the solar panel went out. Seeing no other visitor staying in that hotel, it



was decided to quit the hotel and move to the nearby *srivaishnava ashrama* run by sri Kamalnayan swamy of Kathmandu. The *ashram* was vibrant with the presence of hundreds of visitors. Who ever was staying was provided with wooden cot with hard top with a cushion mattress, cover sheet, and blanket. The *ashram* is a two storey wooden building with a dozen of halls each accommodating about 20 / 30 persons. The in-charge saint, Sri Vishnudas, represented Sri Kamalanayan swamy The visitors were offered free hot water, tea and food. Some of the visitors didn't take *ashram* food,



they cooked their own. The *ashram* has got a large central open courtyard with verandah on all the sides. Separate cluster of toilets for ladies and gents were provided in one corner of the courtyard. The night was very cold (about 3 / 4° C), and visitors began rising from 4 am next day, i.e., June 2, 2009 which was *ganga dusahara* day. The co-pilgrim in the hall of this devotee was a group of a family coming from Pokhara. They (Deepak and Madhava) were Nepal University faculty for teaching Sanskrit at Pokhara college. Their parents were accompanying them on their life cherished religious pilgrimage. On previous day while coming from Jomsom, they had stopped at Kagbeni, confluence of Kali Gandaki and swet Gandaki, for offering oblations



to their forefathers. They had hired a jeep from Jomsom with a decision to stop for an hour at Kagbeni for this purpose.



7. **June 2, 2009 Muktinath** It was *ganga dusahara* day. As the sun was about to rise (about 4:45 am), devotees began rushing up the temple for which a trekking of about 1.0 km to climb about 100 m through rugged stone steps over 700 in numbers, was taken up. Most impressive offering to the lord this morning was found to be burning of bunches of hundreds of thin cotton wicks soaked in ghee in one large brass dish / bowl. After bathing in the *Gomukh dhara* devotees came for *darshan* followed by burning of wicks outside the sanctum sanctorum. Some were reciting *srivishnu sahshranam*, while some offered the recitation from *Geeta*, *Purush Sukta* etc.



There is a *parikrma* trek about 100 / 200 m away circumscribing the temple. On this trek lies *srinrisinha swamy* temple, and goddess *jwalamuki* temple where holy flame is inside the temple. In fact there are two wick size flames (blue flame skirting a central yellow one). One is between two small boulders, and the other one flashes over flowing

stream. Both are quite close, could be about 30 cm apart. By 10:30 am came down to Ranipaua and hired a jeep to Jomsom. It was 1:00 pm at Jomsom, and the day's

food was taken there in a hotel called Himalayan hotel, near Yeti Airline office. Tariff of the hotel was NC 500 for single accommodation having attached toilet. At night an excellent dish of Nepali *Dal Bhat* was served by the hotel for NC 200 only. Although the return ticket was for June 5, 2009, Yeti Airline confirmed a seat on June 4, 2009 with an assurance to take a chance on June 3, 2009 flights also. Luckily at about 7 pm in the evening, Yeti officials confirmed the availability of a seat in the morning flight of June 3, 2009.



Muktinath Temple from *parikram* route (top left), Nrisinha swamy temple (top right), Jwalamukhi temple (bottom left)

8. June 3, 2009, Pokhara

By 8:30 am landed at Pokhara airport from Jomsom. Took a taxi to ashram of srikamalnayan swamy of Kathmandu, near Ramghat (Budha stupa). It was *ekadashi* day, and had a rare divine experience at the *ashram* where more than 50 *shalagram* is worshipped along with Lakshmi - Narayan. Here came a lucky coincidence of seeing a book at the *ashram* "*srirang venkatesh vrihad stotramala*" published from Mumbai (Somani family).



(Kamalnayan Swamy ashram at Pokhara)



9. June 4, 2009 Kathmandu

Left Pokhara at 5 am by a microbus carrying about 15 passengers. The fare charged is NC 325. It reached Kathmandu 200 km from Pokhara at 11:00 am and had stopped midway for breakfast. Manokamana devi temple lies at about 100 km from Pokhara and can be accessed by cable car operating nearby the Pokhara – Kathmandu highway. The journey terminated at new bus park at Kathmandu. From here took a taxi to Hathisar (near Darbar) where Air India office was located. The confirmed ticket was for June 6, 2009 (4:15 pm flight) from Kathmandu to Delhi. On request, Air India provided a confirmed seat (but by paying additional IC 500) in the 10:15 am flight of June 5, 2006.

From new bus park to Hathisar the taxi charged flat rate of NC 270 flat, without any meter reading. While coming back after getting confirmation of flight from Air India, took a taxi from the front road of Darbar; From Hathisar to Darbar came walking to have a feel of the city's prime location. Huge crowd of visitors of Darbar were queuing up on the walk way for their entry. It was earlier called Narayan Hiti and was the residence of the former king. It was earlier planned to stay at Thamel but somehow the time constraint of visiting Pashupatinath took me to new bus park area because while arriving in Kathmandu a lady co-passenger had helped me in introducing with one travel agent in new bus park area who finally suggested me to go to Air India office personally.

While coming back, another taxi was hired and this taxi had agreed to run on meter charge for my destination of new bus park. On reaching the destination I could notice the meter indicated only NC 102 (against NC 270 paid while going to



Air India office). The taxi waited until I got a room in the nearby hotel for a tariff of NC 400 (including TV and attached toilet) with check out time 12 noon next day. After putting the luggage in the hotel moved to Pashupatinath by the same taxi. The meter

showed waiting charge of about NC 30, and final payment up to the temple was NC 400 including the travel from the starting point in front of Darbar.

10. June 4, 2009 Pashupatinath, Kathmandu

The huge, widely spread well laid out lush green campus of the Pashupatinath is located in Goshala area of Kathmandu. There are several other small and medium size temples and buildings on the premises. The main temple possessing the presence of lord is almost on the bank of Bagmati river where dead bodies are also cremated.

Time was almost 13:30 when I entered the temple's threshold. The sanctum



sanctorum has four gates one in each cardinal direction. Only the western gate was open to the devotees at that time. After *darshan* I completed one circumambulation. Some of the devotees seating near the eastern and southern side gates told that soon *halwa bhog* would be offered to the lord and a parcel of that would come to the devotees waiting outside. I took a chance and after a while I could get the holy *Prasad*. After about 15 / 20 minutes *rajbhog* (full meal of the day) was offered to the lord and all the four gates were opened at that time. Devotees thronged through all the four gates. The entire process of offering and puja took about 15 minutes thereafter again the three gates except the

southern one were closed. Before closing the doors *chandan* taken out from the deities body and wrapped in a *belpatra* was distributed to all the devotees. No devotee is allowed to go near the deity and only designated priests offer the puja to the deity while the devotees are kept waiting on the threshold. Thereafter came back to the hotel near new bus park area taking ride of a city bus; the fare paid was NC 30.

11. June 11, 2009 back to Delhi

Left the hotel early morning about 6:00 am and reached the airport in thirty minutes by a taxi paid on meter charge which was about NC 350. The security



check, check -in and getting boarding pass were finished by 8:30 am. After immigration which was just a formality for the Indians (because no visa is required) but presenting passport as a photo ID facilitates quick disposal. Final security check

just before boarding was time taking and boring. Everything was being redone manually although the hand-baggage were screened through x-ray. The flight took off about an hour late and reached Delhi in about two hours. Swine flue screening at Delhi airport took some longer time to come out of the airport. It was learnt at the immigration counter that although visa is not required for travelling to Nepal producing of either passport or voter card ID is essential. No other photo ID was acceptable. Only filled immigration form is turned in over the counter and they stamp the form and not the passport. For Nepal travel no visa is required and the passport works as only an authoritative photo ID.

12. Some more miscellaneous information



Ranipauva *ashram* showing the police post within Kamalnayan swamy *ashram* where trekking permits are registered.

	Latitude	Longitude	Altitude(m)
Nayapul/Birethanti	N 28°17'59"	E083°46'14"	1060
Ghorepani	N 28°24'09"	E083°42'02"	2880
Poon hill	N 28°23'56"	E083°41'18"	3210
Tatopani	N 28°29'50"	E083°39'12"	1255
Ghasa	N 28°35'38"	E083°38'38"	1960
Kalopani	N 28°38'13"	E083°36'17"	2500
Marpha	N 28°45'12"	E083°41'12"	2680
Jomsom	N 28°47'04"	E083°44'07"	2770
Eklabathi	N 28°49'06"	E083°46'26"	2870
Muktinath	N 28°49'00"	E083°52'18"	3790



Krishna Gandaki at Jomsom



Timber and steel suspension foot bridges at Jomsom



13. *Sthala purana* (Extracted from Adiyan's Travelogue)

The following is the *sthalapurana* and some interesting facts about this *divya desam* (Mukthinath) which may be helpful for future pilgrims.

Mukthinath is situated in Upper Mustang area which is a protected zone and hence permit is required from the government. We had read in some book that this *divya desam* is in the midst of forest in an isolated place with no facility but it looks like it is developing now. One need not worry about this as you find travelers now and then, there are sign boards and some hotels/lodges at settlements en route. One can hire a jeep / motorbike so that the baggages could easily be carried to the final destination. Chant the holy names while travelling / trekking and God will take care of everything.

Gandakyaamcha uttare teere
Girirajasya dakshine
Dasayojana vistheernaam
Mahakshetra Vasundharaa

Saalagramamo Mahadevo
devi Dwaravati bhaved
Ubhayossangamo yatra
Muktistattra na samsaya."

"To the north of the river, Gandaki (also called Narayani), and south of the Himalayas, there is the holy region of Saalagramama, which is ten yojanas in extent, where Dwaravati merges into Saalagramama. Undoubtedly such a place is capable of vouchsafing Moksha."

Legend has it that once Bramha got concerned about increasing of the sinners among his creation. Then drops of sweat rolled down his cheeks (Sanskrit - *Ganda*), ultimately collecting themselves into the form of a female child called "Gandaki." She took it into her head to do a severe penance which became so overwhelming that the Devas started trembling before her. As usual they offered her the bait of a boon on return for her stopping her penance, but they met a Tartar in her, for she wanted to mother all the Devas. Not having the power to grant such a boon, the Devas pleaded their inability, at which Gandaki became furious and cursed all the Devas to be born as worms on the earth below. The Devas in their turn placed a counter curse on her head that she should become "Jada" or inert matter.

Naturally Bramha was concerned with this unexpected development. Unable to find a way out, he consulted Indra and Rudra. With them also he drew a blank. Finally, all the three turned to Vishnu, who said: "In as much as the curses have been already pronounced, they cannot be revoked, and both parties affected must suffer them. The problem is how to make them work to their mutual and ultimately universal benefit."

After consideration, Vishnu said: " I shall take up my abode in the Chakra Teertha near Saalagramama kshetra. You, Devas, shall migrate to this hallowed region as "*Vajrakitas*" eating into the pebbles. Gandaki shall in the form of a river fill the universe enveloping the *shilas* hallowed by me." Saalagramama stones are obtained only from the river Gandaki, which is a Himalayan stream, celebrated since antiquity as Narayani, Saligrami, Hiranvati and Hiranyavati. The epic Mahabharata speaks of its sanctity (Bhishma-parva) . The puranas also describe it as a sacred stream in which all the gods and titans abide . By merely looking at it, one would eliminate all his mental defilement's, by touching it his bodily sins are burnt up, and by sipping its water the verbal demerits are thrown out: One who comes into contact with this sacred stream will be liberated from the cycle of birth and deaths, even if he be a sinner. And for the reason, the river Gandaki became among all the rivers extraordinarily sacred. Being a mystic river, looking at it, touching it, bathing in it and sipping its waters will be conducive to eliminate all sins, even the greatest of sins pertaining to the body, speech and mind.

Saalagram Sloka:

dheya sada savitra mandala madhya-varti--- naryanah sarasijasana sannivistah
keyuravan makara kundalavan kiriti --hari hiranmaya vapuh dhrita sankha cakrah

Narayana is the Supreme Personality of Godhead to be meditated upon in the center of the sun globe. He is situated on a lotus flower and seated in the lotus posture. He is adorned with beautiful golden bracelets, amulets, earrings, necklace and a crown. He has the golden effulgence and is seen holding the pure white conch and Sudarshana cakra in His lotus hands. Oh wielder of the conch, disc, club, and other natural weapons, You are the Lord and resident of the spiritual realm. Oh indestructible one, protector of the worlds, oh lotus eyed Lord, please save all of us who have taken shelter of you and appear before us .

Interesting Facts About This Divya Desam:

- Muktinath in Nepal is an important pilgrimage site for Vaishnavites and Buddhists.
- It is one of the eight swayam vyakta kshetrams-out of this 4 are in southern India and 4 in Northern India.
- in Northern India, Perumal has manifested Himself in the form of forest at Naimisaranyam, as water in Pushkar, as mountain in Badri and as Fossils in Saalagramam whereas in rest of India, Perumal is in Archa form (Tirumala, Srirangam) ,
- The best season to visit is during March-April and during September to 1s week of October
- May to August is rainy season and is not advisable to go
- As a visit to this place bestows liberation, this *kshetram* is known as Mukthi *kshetram* and Perumal as MUKTHI NARAYANAN.
- The *sthala mahatmyam* is mentioned in *Skanda Purana*, *Varaha Purana*, *Padma Purana* and *Mahabharata*.

- As per *Padma Purana*, a Brahmana who has undergone Pancha samskaram and has bath in Holy Gandaki and have Muktinarayanan's darshanam, will be bestowed with liberation.
- The significance of *Saalagramama kshetra* is vividly mentioned in Himavat kanda of *Skanda Purana* wherein Lord Subramanya explains to Sage Agastya about this *kshetram* and its *mahatyam*.
- In *Varaha Purana*, Lord Vishnu Himself explains to Bhoodevi about the importance of this *kshetram* and the various *theerthams* in Someswar, Harihar and Mukthinath *kandas*.
 - This place is surrounded by two rivers- the Matsyangadi in the East and the Kali Gandaki in the West.
 - Kali Gandaki is famous for the *shaligrama shilas* as well as the world's deepest gorge.
 - Due to intense meditation, Lord Vishnu started sweating from behind His ears. This transformed into river and as it originated from Gandam (the spot behind ear), she is known as Gandaki" river.
- As all the major rivers in Northern India like Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati are associated with Lord Vishnu, Gandaki river did severe penance and God granted her wish by residing on the banks of the river and thus made it holy. Gandaki river is treated on par with Ganges.
- The river Gandaki is a very ancient river; and the geologists say that it existed even before the formation of the Himalayan ranges. It rises beyond the Himalayan ranges, probably in Tibet, and flows (in the north-south direction) into Nepal. And for the reason, the river Gandaki became among all the rivers extraordinarily sacred. Being a mystic river, looking at it, touching it, bathing in it and sipping its waters will be conducive to eliminate all sins, even the greatest of sins pertaining to the body, speech and mind. My soul danced with joy looking at the nature and being in Gods own world.
- *Varaha Purana* mentions that Perumal conceded to Gandaki's request to be born as her son and hence Perumal manifested Himself as salagramams in water. Due to the Perumal's presence, this has become the most sanctifying river and a dip in this frees one from all sins committed by thought, word and action in innumerable lifetimes, forefathers shall reach heaven and finally attain *moksha*.
- Near to this place is Someshwar , a mountain which is the abode of Shiva where he has manifested himself as *linga*
- The vast tract of land through which the sacred Gandaki flows is known as *Saalagramama kshetra*. As this area was full of "*sala*" trees, it is known thus.
- Lord Vishnu with all the demigods is present in the form of *Saalagramams* . These *Saalagramams* are worshipped in all the major temples across the globe.
- Tulasi, wife of the demon Sankhachoodan cursed Lord Vishnu to become a stone as the Lord as part of His *divya leela* , deceived her. Hence, Lord has taken this form as this is an easier form of worship. The bones of Sankachoodan who was killed by Lord Shiva turned into conches and Tulasi transformed herself into Gandaki river. The tresses of Tulasi turned into Tulasi bushes. As per Tulasi's request, Lord conceded to remain as stone on the banks of Gandaki river.

- Lord summoned the divine architect, Viswakarma to make different images of Him indicating Lords' various manifestations and accordingly, Viswakarma transformed himself into *vajrakreeta* worm and made various signs inside the Saalagramamam stone with its sharp nails.
- The origin of these saligramams are at Damodar kund which is another 2 / 3 days trek from Muktinath and special trekking permit is required from Nepalese government as it is at a higher altitude. These stones mingle with the Gandaki river which has its origin beyond Damodar Kund and gets deposited along the river side. Damodar kund is the place where Nalakuvera and Manigriva , the sons of Kubera who were redeemed from their curse by Lord Krishna as Damodara had bath as per Lords' instructions and attained effulgent bodies. Hence, this kund is known as Damodar Kund. Just by visiting and bathing in this one attains the ability to achieve all his desired objectives and become a detached person even if he is a householder and will not be troubled by pleasure or pain.
- Any fossil stone found on the banks of Gandaki river is deemed to be saligramam especially the ones with marks of discus are manifestations of the Supreme Lord, Sriman Narayanan.
- As a householder may find it difficult to offer prayers by doing *homa* etc. daily as in earlier *yuga*, Perumal has manifested Himself in this form which does not require any purificatory rite. The *aaradhana* can be started directly and is very simple. *Aaradhana* to Saalagramam is to be done with *tulasi* leaves placed on conch and water to be poured on the saalagramam through the nose of the conch.
- Any act at this place fetches manifold benefits on the doer
- Hardly two minutes walk from the temple leads to Jwalamukhi, the place where Brahma did penance for universal welfare and he invoked Lord Vishnu in the form of water and Shiva in the form of fire and offered sacrificial butter and *payasam*. All the demigods personally attended the sacrifice and accepted the offerings. The remnants of this *yagyna* which is in the form of soil near by is partaken by devotees as *prasadam*.
- Brahma performed 3 types of *yagas* at this place-*Davrya yagya* (sacrifice with materials), *gyana yagya* (mental sacrifice-in the sacrificial fire of minds with the sacrificed spatula of breath he meditated on the Supreme Lord Narayana and burnt the material contamination in the form of offerings.), *upsasana yagya*.
- Any living being which dies in this place attains moksham.
- AT a particular place between the temple and Jwalamukhi, one can hear the sound of Ganges flowing into the Patalalok.
- In Varaha Purana, Lord Varaha mentions about the importance of various *theertha* and the results of having bath in those many of which are in different locations on the mountain. He also mentions about Someswhar, the abode of Lord Shiva and the benefits of worshipping Him.
- Many devotees and rishis like Ambarisha, Pundareeka etc have attained liberation after visiting this place.
- As per Mahabharata, King Bharath after renouncing his kingdom reached this *kshetram* and performed austerity. This place is known as

Galeshwar and there is a temple dedicated to Harihar Galeswarnath. Shiva is present in the form of Sadguru Yogeshwar and Vishnu as Lord Jadeshwar.

Saalagramam and its importance:

- Saalagramams are small fossils beautifully carved by *Vajrakreetam* (an insect) and are available in and on the banks of River Kali Gandaki in Nepal.
- These are considered divine manifestations of Perumal and hence they don't need any special consecration rituals to be performed.
- There is no *dosham* to Saalagramams and even it is broken due to accident or naturally, the divinity is said to exist.
- The water which is used for performing *abhishekam* to saalagramam bestows liberation to the person who drinks it knowingly or unknowingly. This practice is followed even today in all *Vaishnava* house when a soul departs from a body.
- Saaligram *aaradhana* is always to be done with conch and *tulasi*.
- In the Skanda Purana, Skanda classifies the types of Saalagramam to Sage Agastya :-
 - o Lord Varaha:- two proportionate marks of discuses on the face of Saalagramam
 - o Lord Vasudeva:- white in colour, very attractive, 2 proportionate marks of discus
 - o Lord Pradhyumna:- long, yellowish, with small marks of discus and with many faces (surfaces)
 - o Lord Aniruddha:- dark saaligram with marks of three lines and a lotus
 - o Lord Narayana:- dark with features of Aniruddha and has a protruding navel with marks of discus.
 - o Lord Matsya:- saligramam with a depressed top and a bulge on both the sides
 - o Lord Kurma:- very bright three faced Saalagramam with signs of either conches or discus
 - o Lord Narasimha:- very bright brown coloured Saalagramam with signs of three lines and two different discus- only *brahmachary* should worship this.
 - o Lord Lakshmi Narasimha:- salagram with signs of two discuses to the left and hallow –this bestows both material pleasures and liberation.
 - o Lord Vamana:- meroonish coloured Saalagramam in the shape of a globe with 5 lines
 - o Lord Balarama:-a conch shaped, yellowish tinged Saalagramam with the marks of plough.

- o Lord Rama:- a conch shaped, yellowish tinged Saalagramam with the marks of bow
- o Lord Parasurama:- a conch shaped, yellowish tinged Saalagramam with the marks of axe
- o Lord Sudarshana:- reddish flower like Saalagramama with a blackish discus
- o Lord Damodara"- big Saalagramam with sudarshana features and with signs of mace and discus to the left, a line on the right and narrow in the middle with signs of discus.
- o Lord Paramesti:- Saalagramam with signs of white lotus and discus
- o Lord Sridhara:- yellowish black bud shaped Saalagramam with signs of two big discus on the back, five lines in the form of a mace and *vanamala*
- o Lord Trivikrama:- bright dark coloured Saalagramam with signs of *kadamba* flower going from bottom to top on both sides
- o Lord Hayagriva:- green tinged Saalagramam with manyhallows and signs of hook shaped discus and a line of knowledge
- o Lord Gadadhara:- saaligram with 3 lines and any three signs

- o Lord Ananta:- saaligram with many faces and signs of many bows clubbed together in the form of a serpent

- o Lord Krishna:- dark coloured Saalagramam with the sign of a *vanamala* to its right - this grants health, pleasures, and fulfills all sorts of desires

SRI SRIDEVI NAYIKA SAMETHA SRI SRIMOORTHY PARABRAHMANE NAMAH:

MOOLAVAR	SRI MOORTHY IN VEETRUIRUNDHA THIRUKOLAM FACING NORTH also known as MUKTHI NARAYANAN
THAYAR	SRIDEVI, BHOODEVI IN NINDRA THIRUKOLAM
VIMANAM	KANAKA
THEERTHAM	GANDAKI RIVER, CHAKRA THEERTHAM
PRATHYAKSHAM	BRAHMA, SIVA, GANDAKI, GARUDA, VINAYAGAR
MANGALASAASANAM	THIRUMANGAI AZHWAR- 10 PASURAMS-988 to 997, PERIAZWAR- 2 PASURAMS(206, 399)
OTHER VIGRAHAMS	GARUDA, BUDDHA, VINAYAGAR

In Peria Thirumozhi, Thirumangai Azhwar has dedicated 10 songs to this *divya desam*. In the pasurams, Azhwar advises his mind to go to Saalagramam and pray to Perumal **who as Sri Ramar , humiliated Soorpanaka and killed Ravana thus emerging victorious in the battle,**

as Sri Krishnar who killed Putanai, ate butter,
as Vamanan who approached Bali Chakravarthy and by asking for 3 feet land measured the 7 universes, ,
as Sri Narasimhar who pierced Hiranya kasapu's heart,
as the Lord whose expansions are the Sun, Moon, Ether, Mountains, Oceans, fire and who is the Preserver of the Universe,
as the Lord who redeemed Shiva from his curse who was roaming with *kapalam* in his hand due to *brahma hathi dosha* committed by him.

He adds that Perumal who is residing at Thiruooraagam(in Kanchipuram), as Perumal who is in half-reclining posture at Thirukudanthai (Kumbakonam), as Adi Ranganathar residing on the banks of Kaveri at Thirupernagar (near Thiruchy), the Lord with innumerable myriad names (sahasra naamam) is in Saalagramam. He says that all the demigods, *vaishnavas*, *brahmanas* *rishis* offer prayers to this Lord who is residing in the mountain which is decorated with varieties of flowers where the honey bees sing sweetly after sucking the honey from the flowers, where the lakes are filled with lotus and fish who happily jump about. In the set of 10 pasurams, Azhwar advises his mind to go to Saalagramam and offer obeisance to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sriman Narayanan. He further advises to either continuously recite the innumerable names of the Lord or recite the 10 pasurams on this Perumal.

Periazhwar has composed 2 pasurams on this divya desam . In pasuram 206, he narrates that Krishna who stole butter from the *gopikas'* house is residing at Saalagramam. In pasuram 399, while composing hymn on Perumal at Kandam Ennum Kadinagar (Thirupiridi *divya desam* popularly known as Jyotir Mutt en route to Badrinath), he recollects Perumal at Sri Vaikuntam, Saalagramam, Dwaraka, Ayodhya, Mathura and Badrinath and says that He is the same Lord who is residing at Thirupiridhi.

Divya Kavi Pillai Iyengar who has composed hymns on all the *divya desams* known as 108 Tirupati Andhadhi mentions that it is futile to be associated with a hoary lineage /family name / varna/ name instead of being associated with Saalagrama Perumal's name. He advises to shed ones ego and advises us to identify ourself as the most humble servant of the Lord.

14. Gandaki in Nepal:

The Kali Gandaki rises in the Tibetan plateau north of the [Himalayas](#) in the [Mustang District](#) of Nepal, near the border with [Tibet](#). The two headwaters of river, Nup Chhu and Shar Chhu ("West River" and "East River") meet near the town of [Lo Manthang](#) in upper Mustang. The river then flows southwest with the name of **Mustang Khola**. In [Kagbeni](#) a major tributary, **Kak Khola**, coming from [Mukthinath](#), meets Mustang Khola; from there, the river is called the **Kali Gandaki** (or variously **Krishna Gandaki**).

The river then flows southward through a steep gorge known as the **Kali Gandaki Gorge**, or **Andha Galchi**, between the mountains [Dhaulagiri](#) (8167 m) to the west and [Annapurna](#) (8091 m) to the east. If one measures the depth of a canyon by the difference between the river height and the heights of the highest peaks on either side, **the Gorge is the world's deepest**. The portion of the river between the Dhaulagiri and

Annapurna massifs is at an elevation of between 1300 metres and 2600 metres^[2], 5500 to 6800 metres lower than the two peaks. **The river is older than the Himalayas.** As tectonic activity forces the mountains higher, the river has cut through the uplift.

South of the gorge, the river is joined by Rahught Khola at Galeshwor, Myagdi Khola at Beni, Modi Khola near Kushma and Badigaad at Rudrabeni. The river then takes a right-angle turn and runs east along the northern edge of the [Mahabharat Range](#). The largest [hydroelectricity](#) project in Nepal is located along this stretch of the river. Turning south again and breaking through the Mahabharats, Kali Gandaki is then joined by a major tributary, Trishuli at Devighat, then by the (East) Rapti draining the [Inner Terai valley](#) known as [Chitwan](#). The Gandaki then crosses the outermost foothills of the Himalayas -- [Sivalik Hills](#) -- into the Terai plains of Nepal. From Devighat, the river flows southwest and is known as [Narayani](#) or Sapt Gandaki. The river later curves back towards the southeast as it enters [India](#).

15. Gandaki In India

The river flows southeast across the [Gangetic plain](#) of [Bihar](#) state, eventually merging with the [Ganga](#) near at Hajipur, or [Patna](#). The entry point of the river at the Indo-Nepal border is also the confluence of Gandak, known as Triveni, with rivers Pachnad and Sonha also descending into India from Nepal. Pandai river flows into Bihar (India) from Nepal in the eastern end of the Valmiki Sanctuary and meets Masan. its drainage area in India is 7620 sqkm. After the river enters India at Triveni, it travels for a further length of 300 km before it joins the Ganga, just downstream of Hajipur at [Sonepur](#) (also known as Harihar Kshetra), near Patna. Before joining the river Ganga near patna, it flows through Champaran, Saran and Muzaffarpur districts. The total length of the river is 630 km out of which 330 km lies in Nepal and Tibet.

It is said that the Gandak River has shifted about 80 km to the east due to tilting in the last 5000 years. The Gandak plains, called the Gandak Megafan comprises Eastern Uttar Pradesh and North Western Bihar and lies in the Middle Gangetic Plains.